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S. L. GHOSH

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URBAN MORALS IN ANCIENT INDIA

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PREFACE

An effort has been made in the following pages to reconstruct, in the light of Vatsyayana's *Kamasutra*, the sexual, life of the people in ancient Indian cities. Despite a certain similarity in the title, there is no connection between this and J. J. Meyer's monumental treatise, *Sexual Life in Ancient India*, which deals with the much earlier epoch of the *Puranas*. Nor is there much common ground between this and Prof. H. C. Chakladar's *Social Life in Ancient India*, which concentrates on principles and details of social organisation during the same period as has been covered by this brochure in the light of the *Kamasutra*. I have tried my best to approach my subject from its own peculiar angle and to formulate independent judgments. If I have succeeded in any measure, it is because *Vatsyayana* had the facts taped out nicely; if I have failed, it is because I was blind enough not to have seen them rightly.

The nucleus of this little work appeared in the form of a serial article in recent issues of the *Current Thought* quarterly. The idea of expanding them into a small volume came from my friend and publisher, Mr. Sushil Gupta, to whose enterprise I am indebted for the publication of this. Due acknowledgements have been made wherever other works have been quoted or referred to. The quotations from the *Kamasutra* are mostly from the English rendering of the work published by the Medical Book Company, Calcutta, with which my name along with that of Dr. B. N. Basu is associated.

S. L. Ghosh

December 1, 1943

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I

ORIGINS AND TIMES OF VATSYAYANA

THE prevalent impression among the majority of educated people in this country is that ancient India was all full of habitable forests, dotted at comfortable intervals with hermitages in which man lived in communion with Nature, spending his waking hours in plain living and high thinking and his sleeping hours in dreams of God. Kings and cities, to many of us, are mere bubbles in the pageant of disembodied culture, and a great civilisation flourished, however, without the paraphernalia that garnished it in other countries. That is a beautiful but imaginary picture. The prevalent impression among ordinary people in foreign countries is that ancient Indians lived like barbarians in jungles. That also is a spitefully false picture. Life in ancient India was divided between the highly organised and sophisticated secular life of towns and cities on the one hand and the simple and predominantly religious life in villages on the other. If the spirit had its seat of honour, the flesh received its due meed of indulgence. Striking testimony of the secular life of the ancient Hindus is given by *Vatsyayana* in his *Kamasutra*, a remarkable book on the sexual life of the ancient times, to which the following lines are devoted.

The exact age in which this great man lived is still a matter of conjecture. His commentator, *Yashodhara*, is interpreted by some critics to have implied

that the book was written about 675 B.C., but internal evidence shows this to be highly improbable. It appears to be later than Asoka the Great but not, at any rate, later than the 3rd century A.D.[1] Nothing is definitely known about the personal life of the author or about the part of the country he lived in. His commentator records that he was born in Taxila in the Punjab in a Brahmin family, that his personal name was *Mallanaga* and that his clan name was *Vatsyayana* or "a scion of the *Vatsya* clan". That is all that is on record. Sir Richard Burton thinks that he pro-

[1] This is the opinion expressed by Prof. H. C. Chakladar in *Studies In Vatsyayana's Kamasutra*, Greater India Society's Publication No. 3, 1929. In pp. 32-33 Prof. Chakladar states: "The time, therefore, described by *Vatsyayana* is that when the line of the great Andhra Emperors had come to an end and the country was split up into a number of small kingdoms, among which the most considerable were those ruled over by the *Andhrabratyas*, or dynasties sprung up from the officers of the imperial Andhras. Among them the Puranas mention the Abhiras the Gardabhinas, the Sakas and also some Andhras who evidently ruled over a limited territory at the time referred to. The time when *Vatsyayana* flourished is, therefore, the period when these later Andhra Kings and the Abhiras ruled simultaneously over different parts of Western India, that is, subsequent to *circa* 225 A.C., when the line of the great Andhras disappeared and before the beginning of the fourth century A.C., when the Guptas, of whom there is no mention in the *Kamasutra*, were again uniting Northern India under a common sway. From this the conclusion is inevitable that the *Kamasutra* was composed about the middle of the third century A.C. and this agrees with the conclusion arrived at from an examination of the literary data".

Mahamahopadhyaya Haraprosâd Sastri considered that the *Kamasutra* was written in the 1st century A.D., while Professors Jolly and Winternitz are inclined to place it in the fourth century A.D. Prof. Batuknath Bhattacharyya finds it "hard to believe" that the *Kamasutra* was not composed between 600 B.C. and 200 B.C. The inquisitive reader will find an interesting discussion on the point in Prof. Chakladar's book, with the main conclusions of which the writer of this article is in agreement.

bably wrote while staying in Benares,[1] but that is absolutely a conjecture. On the other hand, some Indian critics think that he was probably a resident of Western India.[2] That again, is an inference drawn from slender premises. What seems practically certain, however, is that he had either travelled nearly the whole of the continental vastness of India from Bactria to Bengal and collected details about sexual practice in every land or that he had gathered his details from a study of the available literature on the subject. But the fact remains that confirmatory literature describing the contemporary sexual customs and traditions of different parts of India is very meagre. There are, of course, frequent references in the *Kamasutra* to earlier preceptors, namely, *Vabhrabya*, *Dattaka*, *Ghotakamukha*, *Charayana*, *Gonardiya* (or *Gonardaniya*), *Gonikaputra*, *Subarnanabha* and *Kuchumara*. These, however, have invariably been made in connection with the enunciation of certain principles of conduct or with general observations on the psychology and technique of sexual behaviour, and nowhere in connection with local customs or regional practices in sexual practice. It will also be noticed, incidentally, that while *Vatsyayana* has often posed the opinions of his predecessors, not unoften he has chosen to differ with them. As he has himself mentioned at the end of the book, he had analysed, examined and verified them. It will not be unreasonable, therefore, to assume that *Vatsyayana's* information about sexual practices and

[1] *The Kamasutra of Vatsyayana*, English rendering by the Kamashastra Society of London and Benares. See Introduction.

[2] Prof. Chakladar, *Studies*, p. 96.

customs in different parts of India are first-hand or at least authentic.[1]

The fixing of the time of writing of the *Kamasutra* is important because it attaches the sexual practices and customs to a particular period and gives the research worker an opportunity to work up a complete picture of life in that period by placing in their proper position all the relevant facts drawn from this and other sources.

It is notable that *Vasyayana* claims for the principles of amatory conduct laid down by him the same antiquity and divinity of origin as the religious *Shastras*. *Prajapati Brahma*, the Author of Creation, having created the universe and mankind, gave for the latter's direction and guidance in every matter, including sexual conduct, instructions covering one hundred thousand chapters. The first or self-born *Manu* took out the part relating to ethical and religious conduct (Dharma) and made it into a separate *Shastra*. *Vrihaspati*, the counsellor of the gods, took out the part relating to acquisition of wealth (Artha) and made a separate *Shastra*. *Nandi*, the follower of *Siva* who was creation's greatest love expert, took out the part relating to amatory conduct and made the third separate *Shastra*. *Svetaketu* later condensed the last section into 5000 chapters, which underwent a further condensation (was it revision as well?) in the hands of *Vabhrabya*, who gathered it all into a body of 150 chapters under seven divisions. These are: (*i*) general

[1] Prof. H. C. Chakladar points out. "The meagre mention of the countries of the central and eastern portions of Northern India and the detailed description of the customs of Western India makes it abundantly clear that *Vatsyayana* had personal knowledge of the Western portion alone." *Studies*, p. 96.

conduct, (*ii*) conduct with relation to virgin brides and marriage, (*iii*) conduct of wives and husbands in relation to each other, (*iv*) conduct of prostitutes, (*v*) conduct in relation to mistresses who are wives of others, (*vi*) technique of sexual union and (*vii*) secret instructions on aphrodisiacs, beautifying agents etc. In course of time, seven experts (already named) worked separately on the seven divisions. Gradually they became so unwieldy on account of the ramifications that the broad principles were coming to be forgotten and unprincipled sexual conduct and customs coming into vogue. This set *Vatsyayana* to codify the whole *Shastra* in the form of *sutras* (mnemonics). At the time he wrote, the original comprehensive work of *Vabhrabya* was still available but was not popular. The big divisional works of *Dattaka*, *Charayana*, *Ghotakamukha*, *Gonikaputra*, *Subarnanabha* and *Kuchumara* were also available but their very specialisation tended to render them eclectic. Moreover, they did not possess the authority and sanctity of *Vabhrabya*, whose claim to infallible correctness as continuing the divine line of the *Shastras* was recognised. Unfortunately, all these earlier works have perished, though *Yashodhara*, the commentator of the *Kamasutra*, who belonged to the 12th century A.D., quotes several passages from *Vabhrabya* etc. What the principles taught by the ancient writers were it is almost impossible to know, for *Vatsyayana* without a doubt amended them in the light of contemporary factors in social life. But basically the *Kamasutra* is a continuation of the ancient Hindu traditions of sex life and is a proof that the Science of Love was all

along considered as a part of the cultural make-up of the civilised man in India.[1]

References made here and there in the *Kamasutra* furnish some evidence of the times of which he wrote. It was an era of continued peace. There was no central imperial authority over any considerable part of India, at least over Northern India. The country was divided into tribal areas and territories, some of them (like the *Grama-nari*) being small principalities. This percelling out of the land permitted and encouraged the growth of tribal practices and customs of sexual behaviour which differed from one tribe to another. The four caste divisions had crystallised again after the disturbing spell of Buddhism and there was a remarkable growth of urban life, patronised by rich and powerful members of the higher castes or *Varnas*, under a firm superstructure of the feudal social order. Life in towns and cities presented almost all the sophistries of urban life in Europe in the Middle Ages, when the nobles led a completely different life from that led by people in the villages, composed mainly of peasants and other labourers belonging to the *Sudra* caste and of Brahmins whom the gilded corruption of city life appalled. It was a time when the stern self-denial and austerity of Buddhist and Jain monastic life had begun to degenerate, in the hands of unworthy disciples, into secret and sometimes open practice of sexual vices. Nuns and female sanyasins—Buddhist, Jain and Hindus

[1] *Vatsyayana's* account of the primeval origin of the *Kama Shastra* is also supported by the *Mahabharata*. *Svetaketu*, son of *Uddalaka*, is said to have laid down for the first time moral laws by which unrestrained access to men by women was forbidden and the institution of marital fidelity founded. Promiscuity, says *Pandu* in I, 122, "was the moral law of early times."

—who lived, or plied their begging profession, in cities often acted as intermediaries in illicit love and so suspect were they in the eyes of the fashionable citizens that even *Vatsyayana* felt called upon to warn virtuous wives against so much as speaking to them.[1] It is remarkable that *Vatsyayana* wrote only about polite society in cities and towns; this is probably due to the circumstances that literacy was much more limited in ancient times and that since education was permitted only to the wealtheir classes who must belong to the higher castes, all educated persons except the purist Brahmins congregated in cities and towns. The contempt in which they held the bucolic folk is reflected in the *Kamasutra*, which recommends that "where a gentleman cannot procure company or would not mix with the available gentry he should keep a suite of followers according to his means in order to keep up the traditional state of a gentleman" without soiling his character of a beau by mixing with rustics. Further, "country people should encourage intelligent and curious co-villagers to discuss the splendid mode of living of townsfolk and should follow it in a respectful frame of mind".[2] Even a prostitute had to conceal her amours with a bucolic fellow lest the news should make her the object of derision of townsfolk.[3] The feudal hierarchy was in full operation in towns, where

[1] *Kamasutra, Bharyadhikaranam* (Section Relating to Wives), Ch. I: "A wife should always avoid the company of professional beggar-women, Buddhist nuns, secretly unchaste women, women magicians, women soothsayers and women who practise the occult arts of spell-binding etc."

[2] Ibid., *Sadharanadhikaranam*, Ch. IV.

[3] Ibid., *Samprayogadhikaranam*, Chapter X. Cf. *Khala-raga* (Clandestine Union):

even festivities were classified into those meant for the elect and those meant for the public.[1]

Courtesans were held in high esteem and no social gathering of groups of citizens was complete without a courtesan, who was considered to be an authority on the polite and fine arts. She was even honoured by kings and praised by leaders of fashion, who visited her class as a matter of social routine. She was the life and soul of a garden party—in fact, no group enjoyment was possible without a courtesan.[2] The centre of urban life was either a king or a noble ruling a part of a king's realm or a direct representative of the king. From the court and immediate circle of this source and fountainhead flowed all the fashion. The nobles and the wealthy classes—they had to belong to the higher castes to be either nobles or rich men—emulated royalty in its fineness of manners, it selevation of tastes in luxury and comfort and its whimsical abandonment to sensual pleasures, which only over-nutrition and ample

"This name is given to the union between a rustic and a courtesan, who takes care to keep stories of such union a secret. This union is generally resorted to by courtesans on account of excess of *libido*. Similarly, the union of beaux with rustic women like wives of farmers, female cowherds and wives of bird-catchers and scavengers and such other women, which is kept secret from others' knowledge, is called *Clandestine Union*".

[1] Ibid., *Sadharanadhikaranam*, Chapter IV, *Samasya-krida*. Also *Jayamangala* commentary on the above.

[2] *Courtesans* were a superior type of prostitutes. *Vatsyayana* mentions three types of public women, *viz.* (1) courtesans, who know all the arts of culture and love, (2) those who merely exploit their beauty without knowing the arts and (3) those who are merely hired for the satisfaction of the male's urgent animal desire. Thus, famous singers, danseuses, actresses, professional hostesses and even debaters were to be found among courtesans, whose residences were sometimes used for holding literary *soirees* and polemical debates.

leisure can produce. Thus the practice of polygamy, always a privilege of the moneyed class which alone can procure creature comforts for a number of wives, mistresses and concubines and can provide for the needs of a large number of children and the vice of seducing other peoples' wives and that of seeking sexual satisfaction in novel and perverse manners percolated from high circles into the wider lower strata of the feudal hierarchy and overcame, in the minds of urban people, the excellent moral considerations of *Parshvanath*, *Buddha* or the *Brahmins* and also the fear of divine retribution for sinful transgressions in the everlasting tortures of a terrible Hell.

The fact that *Vatsyayana* thought the time fit for a re-enunciation of the principles of correct sexual conduct—in other words, that he chose to write a grammar of sexual conduct—appears to suggest strongly that there was such a state of corruption, such uncontrolled libertinism in town life as to need a check or regulation. It is true that he has dwelt on the technique of seduction of others' wives; but the grounds he has adduced in justifying adultery for very special reasons show clearly that he intended it to be employed more as a diplomatic and political weapon than as a means of gratification of lust. Corrupt sexual practices among kings and the nobility have been condemned; the ways of unfaithful and abnormally sexed wives minutely described and the character, conduct and wiles of designing philanderers set out in detail in order to forewarn and forearm husbands and virtuous wives. Abnormal and perverse methods in love and sexual gratification have been condemned. The ways of

prostitutes and courtesans who hire out their love and charms have also been narrated with rare realism. On the other hand, the duties and responsibilities of good wives have been meticulously—and one might even say enthusiastically—laid down; polygamy has been discouraged and monogamy praised, and marriages of love have been preferred to marriages of convenience. All these lend force to the argument that *Vatsyayana* strove, by writing his book, to hold a mirror to the degradation to which an uncontrolled pursuit of sensual pleasures had been leading and that this purpose was to lay down a rational procedure of sexual behaviour as the alternative to an inevitable social decadence.

II

THE HINDU VIEW OF SEX IN LIFE

IT MAY be argued that if the author of the *Kamasutra* wanted to correct the gilded vices of city life, he should have advised abstinence and recommended the ideal of plain living and high thinking that has been held up as one of ancient India's distinctive features. This argument is open to two objections: in the first instance, abstinence as an ideal was already in vogue under the teachings of Buddhist and Jain religious teachers. The latter not only preached abstinence but also stressed the mortification of the flesh to enforce that abstinence. But wealth and luxury had triumphed and wealthy and powerful people paid scant regard to the professors of self-denial. To add one more note to the drowned voice of an extremely opposed view of life would, therefore, have little served any purpose. Secondly, *Vatsyayana*, like the vast majority of ancient Indians, did not believe in the mortification of the flesh. His fundamental philosophy included as life's Objectives the cultivation of religion and wealth and the satisfaction of desires but did not include the attainment of *moksha* or freedom from the recurring cycles of birth and pain. There is nothing in the book to show that he regarded the fulfilment of normal desires as either base or derogatory to the highest purpose of life. On the other hand, he considered it to be as necessary as satisfying the instinct of hunger. At the same time, he was emphatic on the point that control must be

exercised on carnal appetites so that they may not militate against the pursuit of the two other Objectives of life. *Vatsyayana's* statement of the Three Objectives, his references to sacrificial rites and the eclectic methods he has prescribed for sexual power seem to place him on a line with believers in the Tantric cult, which is regarded as the oldest form of organised religious worship in India. This cult maintains, among other things, that sexual energy or *libido* is but a manifestation of the Divine Energy (Shakti) that is the basis of every creature's being. Sexual function, with its mysterious phenomenon of reproduction, represents the miracle of energy. Far from being shameful or derogatory to spiritual advancement, a normal sex life is absolutely necessary to ensure it.

In taking up this standpoint, *Vatsyayana* has only reaffirmed the traditional Hindu attitude towards sexual enjoyment. In the *Mahabharata, Bhima* expresses the opinion that "without *Kama* a man has no wish for worldly profit (*Artha*), without *Kama* a man does not strive after the Good (*Dharma*). For the sake of *Kama* the *Rishis* even give themselves up to asceticism, eating the leaves of trees, fruits and roots, living on the air, and wholly bridling their senses, and others bend all their zeal to the *Vedas* and lesser *Vedas*, making their way through the whole of the holy study, as also to ancestral offerings, and sacrificial acts, to alms-giving and alms-taking. Traders, husbandmen, craftsmen, as also artists, and those who carry out actions consecrated to the gods, give themselves up to their works because of *Kama*. Others, again, take to the sea filled with *Kama;* for *Kama* has

the most varied forms; everything is steeped in *Kama*. No being ever was, or is, or will be, higher than the being that is filled with *Kama*. It is the innermost core (of the world), O King of righteousness; on it is founded *Dharma* and *Artha*. As butter from sour milk, so *Kama* comes forth from *Artha* and *Dharma* . . . . *Kama* is more excellent than *Artha* and *Dharma*. As honey is the sweet juice from the flower, so *Kama* is from these two, according to the teaching of tradition. *Kama* is the womb of *Dharma* and *Artha*, and *Kama* makes up their essence. Without *Kama* the manifold workings of the world would not be thinkable.

> "Give thyself up to *Kama*, take thy joy with women
> In fair garb and ornament, and sweet to behold,
> With young women loosed in the madness of drink;
> For *Kama*, O King, for us is greatest of all."[1]

This, of course, is one of the many points of view that differ from, and sometimes oppose, one another and are found strewn in the *Puranas*. But the fact that this expression of opinion comes from such a hero as *Bhima* endows it with authenticity. Similar opinions are also to be found in all the *Puranas*. They leave one in no doubt that from the dim dawn of history the Hindus regarded sex as the central problem of life.

Vatsyayana, however, marks a definite advance on the more ancient outlook on the sexual impulse. He agrees that unbridled pursuit of sexual pleasures has sent, and will continue to send, many a person to ruin.

[1] Quoted from J. J. Meyer's *Sexual Life in Ancient India*, pp. 331-2. It is to be noted that as far back as the time of the *Mahabharata*, the Indian mind understood the essential identity of the sex urge with the urge for self-expression.

Nevertheless "sexual satisfaction, like food, is equally essential to the maintenance of bodily health and is consequently as important as wealth and religion. Though evil effects may follow over-indulgence, passion has to be appeased; one cannot refrain from cooking food because beggars are about or from sowing barley seed lest the deer should come and eat up all the corn. The gratification of the sexual impulse is as necessary as the pursuit of *dharma* or *artha*". Further, "man will attain unblemished happiness by serving *artha*, *kama* and *dharma* in this manner. Cultured men engage in activities that do not endanger their prospects in the other world, that do not involve loss of wealth and that are withal pleasant. They should do what favours all the the Objectives or two or even one of them without conflicting with the others or one of the others".[1] In concluding his treatise also, *Vatsyayana* reminds the reader that "one who has rightly understood the principles of this science gains mastery over the sexual desire by pursuing without detriment the three Objectives of life—*dharma*, *artha* and *kama*—and by establishing himself in the proper path for success in this and the next world. Unfailing success awaits the wise and prudent man who, having mastered this science, pays strict attention to *dharma* and *artha* and also has *kama* without excessive passion and applies the principles of this science in the appropriate manner".[2]

Now, what about the man or woman gifted with an abundance of sexual vigour? Such a person, for the

[1] Kamasutra, *Sadharanadhikaranam*, Ch. II.
[2] Kamasutra, *Aupanishadikadhikaranam*, Ch. II.

normal satisfaction of his or her sexual desire, would probably require more than one partner in sexual experience. It was probably this consideration, among others, that moved *Vatsyayana*, with his open predilection for mongamy and chastity, to tolerate polygamy, irregular unions and occasional resort to prostitutes. After all, he knew, like twentieth-century advocates of sex education, that the only way to correct perversions and malpractices and avoid much of the marital unhappiness born of ignorance of the ways of overcoming physical and temperamental disparities was to let young men and women know about the right methods of sexual enjoyment. To this aspect of the *Kamasutra*, however, we shall come later.

One more point may be touched briefly here. It may be asked, "Where is the limit that marks off normality from excess?" *Vatsyayana's* reply is, "To the extent that sexual enjoyment does not hamper the pursuit of the other two Objectives of Life". "Satisfaction of erotic desire," he observes, "is subordinate to pursuit of wealth which, again, is subordinate to that of religious merit. Religious merit, therefore, has the pride of place among life's objectives".[1]

Sex education for the young men and women of the higher strata of society was more the rule in ancient India than the exception. The psychological and cultural factors involved in sexual relationship among individuals were well recognised. It was perfectly realised that abundance of leisure and excess of nutrition—features common to what has been described as the "leisured class"—led to an increase in sexual *libido*,

[1] Ibid., *Sadharanadhikaranam*, Ch. II.

and that the normal standard of sexual desire of the *Sudra* or the labouring class was consequently far lower than that of the privileged classes. While the abundance of leisure introduced the element of discrimination more and more into the primary biological urge for sexual gratification the increased *libido* introduced a more compelling factor in an increased urge for gratification. In men this was easier to obtain by having a number of wives, concubines and prostitutes, but in women it was a far more difficult proposition. An ungratified wife secured her satisfaction by stealth, and this not only offended the man's sense of sanctity of private property but also tended to undermine the basis of a society that primarily rested upon the birth qualification. *Manu* suggested that women should be made to shed their excess *libido* by doing hard physical labour[1] but this was regarded by men of fashion as well

[1] *Manusanhita*, IX. Sl. 10—17. Indeed, the indictment of womankind by the great lawgiver of the Hindus is apt to be viewed by modern Hindus as extra strong and vindictive. "Wives", says this great sage, "cannot be kept under control by force, and therefore should be kept down by being employed in storing and spending money, in maintaining the cleanliness of their persons and the house and in looking after the beddings, wearing apparel and household furniture." He, however, admits that even when imprisoned in the house and closely guarded by their male relations, women are not sufficiently protected against transgressing the marital vow of chastity and that only women who guard themselves can be said to be truly guarded. "Wine-drinking, evil company, separation from the husband, idle rambling, sleep at the improper time and residence in another's house are the six factors that tend to define a woman's virtue," he says ; for women "do not care for personal beauty or young age but only long for sexual intercourse with men, whether good-looking or ugly", and on account of the sprouting up of erotic fancies in their minds at the mere sight of men and on account of their inborn absence of affection and their innate fickleness of heart, women, though well protected by their husbands, *do* make transgressions against them. Having known

as medical men of the time as a crude and rather ineffective remedy. A woman in love with her husband, receiving also the fullest satisfaction of her desires from him, was far better insured against succumbing to the weight of chance desires, they maintained. The aim of sex education, as the ancient Indian preceptors understood it, was to effect equal sexual gratification in husband and wife and both young men and girls of nobler and wealther families were taught the technique by which the usual physical and psychological disparities affecting sexual union between husband and wife might be levelled down. This technique mainly consists of love-play before actual sexual union though in a lesser way it is related to the more pervasive and more permanent business of conjugal love and friendship and of the entire field of domestic life. In short, the ancients considered that a good wife was at once a good housewife and good mistress and that a good husband was a good provider and a good lover in one. Sex education, therefore, was incorporated into the general curriculum of liberal education.

The sixty-four arts mentioned in the *Kamasutra*, are those fine arts that serve to increase and cement

their God-viven nature, let a man protect his wife to the best of his endeavours". *Manu's* indictment of womankind does not stop here. He goes on further to say that "fondness for ornaments, beds and cushions, intense erotic feelings, anger, crookedness and scandal-mongering are natural to women." This violent harangue leaves no doubt about the state of women as chattel for in the very next two *slokas Manu* discloses that "women are like unto inorganic things" like furniture and utensils and that one Vedic *mantra* is sufficient to cleanse her of the sin of transgression. This *mantra*, significantly, reads: "Inasmuch as my mother, faithless to her lord, used to roam about in search of other men, may my father purify her menstrual fluid, defiled by incests with other men".

conjugal love and furnish common pastimes for the lovers to spend their time agreeably together or alone. A coincidence accountable to the ancients' love of symmetry is that the technique of love-play is "roughly" divided into sixty-four parts. To go back to the sixty-four accessory arts, the cultivation of these was obligatory on both the sexes. A man who did not know them well was not a qualified man of fashion (*nagarika*). *Vatsyayana* particularly recommends them for respectable girls, who had to compete in the securing of their husband's affection against the more experienced and professionally more capable prostitutes. The essential modernity of this attitude no one can deny.

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III

THE LIFE AND LOVES OF A CITIZEN

THE picture *Vatsyayana* has drawn of the daily life of a man of fashion is one that can be applied in many important details to the daily life of a feudal nobleman in any country. The picture is not comprehensive, as *Vatsyayana* was concerned exclusively with the intimate amatory aspect of the urban gentleman's life; but within this limit it is perfect. There is no mention whether the daily routine set forth in the book held good for the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year or whether it applied only to those intervals in the activity for gathering wealth or following a profession or doing service under the king which the beaux wanted to fill up with the procurement of sensual pleasures. If however, they were not successors to considerable wealth, they would have to work for it. And in that case our beaux, to be retired gentlemen about town, would have to be at least middle-aged. Probably *Vatsyayana* means that a genuine beau should have launched himself into the career of a full-fledged citizen after having made his pile or come into it by succession. Thus many of the beaux, who had not succeeded their rich parents or relations, certainly were middle-aged and hardened in the ways of life, who set themselves about in a deliberate manner in the business of squeezing out the last drop of pleasure for their money.[1]

6124.

[1] Kamasutra, *Sadharanadhikaranam*, Ch. IV.

The beaux flocked to big and small towns and built houses with extensive grounds which they developed into orchards and flower-gardens. A summer-house in the heart of the garden was an indispensable necessity, and hardly less necessary was a garden-house in the neighbouring rural areas. The city mansion was designed to have two portions—the outer and the inner, the first being used by the master of the house for his pleasures by day and night and the last being used by women and for domestic purposes. To the outer portion and the pleasure-garden *Vatsyayana* has devoted minute attention, though he makes no mention of the disposition of the servants' quarters, the stables and other structures that completed the rich man's mansion. This portion of the house included the drawing-room or *salon* which served as the reception-room by day and pleasure-room by night. It contained, among many other necessaries, two beds, flowers, wines and refreshments, musical instruments, colours and brushes for painting, and books. In a gallery outside the room were singing birds in cages hung from ivory brackets and in an outhouse nearby were a complete set of tools for amateur carpentry. In the summer-house farther away into the shady interior of the gardens there were swings, the ornamental pond and a bowered terrace where lovers crooned into the ears of their beloved.

This description of the *salon* and the gardens makes one thing clear : it is that sexual pleasure was regarded by the ancients as a fine art closely allied to, and interwoven with, the other fine arts and that, in the eyes of the urban population at least, no feeling of shame was

attached to sexual gratification until it offended a very liberal moral code. In ancient India marriage was for every able-bodied man and woman a sacred duty the avowed object of which was to obtain children. It was not necessary for one to love his wife but he had a definite duty by her, and that duty was to impregnate her every time she had the menses. On the fourth day after the onset of catamenia, a wife would have a ceremonial bath to make herself "clean" and make oblations (*homa*) to the gods. For five days from that date she was regarded as pre-eminently fit for impregnation and during these days a wife had the right to demand sexual satisfaction from the husband. This duty done, the husband was free to pursue his extra-marital amours. It was sometimes possible for him to be in love with his wife but tradition, teaching and opportunity often led him to find for greater pleasure in the arms of a mistress or a prostitute. Particularly in marriges of convenience, in which boys and, more often, girls were wedded in early adolescence, was this the case. Where, however, they married late and out of mutual attraction (*Gandharva* marriages) the husband could be expected to find in his own wife both a mother for his offspring and a mistress for himself. But, as is usual with the hereditary rich, arranged marriages were beginning to supersede love marriages in *Vatsyayana's* time and consequently the pursuit of extra-marital pleasures, including whore-mongering, was beginning to be regarded as a cultural qualification.

Let us now consider how the beau passed his day in the pursuit of delectable pleasures.

He rose at dawn (in fact, leaving the bed 2 *ghatikas* or 48 minutes before sunrise was the first essential daily duty of every right-minded Hindu of the three higher castes), made himself clean by evacuation of faeces and urine, brushed his teeth with young branches of medicinal plants, bathed himself and offered his daily *puja* at the family shrine. So far his routine was similar to that followed by ritualist Brahmins and ascetics. These done, he perfumed himself with fragrant pastes, unguents and fumes, made himself up with the help of powders (chiefly the pollens of certain fresh flowers), painted his lips with wax and lacquer dyes and scrutinised himself in highly polished metal mirrors then in vogue. At last he was in a position to start for attending to his business affairs and he sallied forth, clad in spotless garments and with his box of betel and spices in hand. Between his *puja* and his make-up he would have taken his morning meal. The other principal meal he took either late in the afternoon or in the evening. In between he would have snacks of refreshments, particularly in the course of the night's pleasances. He was very keen on personal cleanliness, for he was anxious to retain the good opinion of courtesans and friends. Accordingly, he bathed every day, had his limbs rubbed with oil every other day, used an oleaginous shampoo every third day, shaved his beard every fourth day (the moustache would remain as the proud pennant of his manhood) and his private parts every fifth day and used depilatories every tenth day to remove unwanted hairs.

Whether he attended to serious business for an hour or two in the morning it is not stated, but it is pro-

bable that he devoted some time to the management of his affairs. Then he reverted to the pursuit of pleasures for the rest of the day. He trained his talking and fighting birds, played games of chess or dice with his intimate followers and had a midday siesta. On rising in the afternoon, he dressed himself carefully and went out, either on foot or on horseback or in his chariot, to meet his social friends either at the place of a courtesan or a friend or at one of the *casinos* where they betted high over bids of dice. Almost everywhere he went for pleasure the courtesan, with her education and experience, was a *sine qua non.* The business at the courtesan's or the friend's place was not by any means crudely sexual. There they discussed literature and poetry, made music and drank wines. Sometimes the company would come out and stroll in the public gardens or go down into the tanks to have hilarious water sports.

As the sun went down our beau went back home to find his *salon* cleaned, beflowered and perfumed. There he sat in dandy dress, in the company of his own retinue, to receive the woman of his desire—prostitute or mistress, as the case might be. The evening session was frankly carnal. Beau, mistress and members of the retinue made merry. Flasks of wine would pass from one lip to another, amusing stories would be told, there would be songs and dancing until the host, under the influence of generous libations and bonhomie, showed an inclination to be alone with his woman. Then the friends would discreetly withdraw and the wheel of passion roll rapidly to the climax. After-

wards, there would be refreshments and drinks again, and farewell and so on to sleep.

A beau was required to keep a retinue of the *pithamarda* (a travelling professor of the sixty-four fine arts), the *bita* (a former beau who, having lost everything, was now reduced to the position of a prostitute's procurer) and the *vidushaka* (the professional entertainer or jester). These were his confidants and advisers in love affairs and kept him company in his jaunts and revels.

This, in short, was the quintessence of the personal life of a beau. He, however, had his social obligations which *Vatsyayana* classifies into five heads. The first and foremost is his participation in the festivities on days sacred to the deities. These took place on appointed days either once or twice a month, when men of fashion, together with their ladies and the city's darlings, the courtesans, foregathered at the town arts institute and watched local and foreign artists display their skill in dancing, music and theatricals. Prizes and rewards were generously awarded. Sometimes, when a programmed artist was absent, a beau would step on to the stage to understudy him. Presence and active co-operation in the successful management of these functions were regarded as essential qualifications of a beau. Second on the list is "social gatherings." To this we have already referred while describing the afternoon's programme. The third is "drinking parties", a variation of the second. The fourth is "garden parties" outside the urban limits. Some beau would invite a number of his fashionable

friends to his garden for a day's whoopee. The latter rode to the place in company with courtesans and servitors in the morning, spent the day in various diversions and returned in the evening exhausted with the day's pleasures.

All these four were confined to the gentry alone, the common people having no right of entry to them. But there were community festivals in which everybody participated. On those occasions sports and other competitions were held, and the high-born were required to show their superiority to the common people by carrying off the honours at these contests.

A brief reference to these community festivals will not be out of place here. *Vatsyayana* mentions twenty of them but apparently some of them were of local observance. But on the night of the second full-moon is autumn, the new-moon might following it and the night but one preceding the first spring full-moon all citizens—men and women alike—turned out into the public gardens and other places of entertainment. At all the community festivals the cultured people enjoyed themselves, while the depraved sought—and probably found—opportunities to follow their wicked intentions. Lovers kept dates with their sweethearts and so also did philanderers and adulterers. But all that was carried on *sub rosa* and there is no evidence, either in the *Kamasutra* or elsewhere, that anything approaching a bacchanalian orgy was ever permitted to develop at these festivals. For one thing, drunkenness or disorderliness in public was a serious disqualification for fashionable citizenship. For another thing,

the Indian libertine always considered sexual relationship as a work of art. The beau in *Vatsyayana's* time had as much horror of being crudely sensual as of being excommunicated.[1]

[1] Sexual contact with women who solicited satisfaction in public was forbidden.—*Kamasutra, Sadharanadhikarana,* Ch. V. Sexual intercourse with female menials or common whores or service maids or rustic women, which was resorted to as a means of relieving the strain of excess *libido* and did not call for the employment of love-play, was looked down upon by the beaux as something to be ashamed of and kept secret.—*Ibid., Samprayogikadhikarana,* Ch. X.

IV

WOMEN, MARRIAGE AND COURTSHIP

MUCH light is thrown on the position of women in the chapters relating to marriage and wives, though their legal status finds no mention in *Vatsyayana*. Women had no independent economic existence, and their claim to the right of culture and education was disputed, though as yet with little effect. The author of the *Kamasutra* is, in fact, a warm advocate of women's education. There was considerable freedom of movement for women, who made full use of it on the occasions of festivals and other popular diversions. Early marriages were coming into vogue: this was probably more a direct result of hereditary feudalism than of any other single factor, though it is probable that the tightening hold of Brahminism and its efforts to secure purity of the "Aryan" blood among the higher castes had something to do with it. These marriages were settled after negotiations between families within the same caste and social group and consummated before the girl had attained her puberty. A girl was considered fit for the sexual life as soon as she had attained her puberty and a boy became fit to be a father on crossing the threshold of sixteen years. The approved aim of marriage was progeny and credit in the society of people of the same caste. It might or might not—as we have already remarked—satisfy the demand for pleasure. The *sine qua non* of lawful marriage was that the bridegroom and the bride should

belong to the same caste, that the bride must not have been previously betrothed to another and that she must not have lost her virginity previously. There was no question of legitimate connection with a woman of a different caste or even with a woman of the same caste who had been married to another man. This was ethically condemned and legally subject to drastic penalties. But one could without impunity seek happiness in the arms of a prostitute or a voluptuous widow, such connection being neither recommended nor prohibited. *Vabhrabya*, an earlier authority, ethically permitted connection with married women who had defiled the sanctity of the marital bed with five lovers but it is doubtful if this permission had social sanction behind it. The whole range of adulterous relationships was contraband and clandestine. To this, however, we shall return later on.

Marriages among the wealthy classes, particularly among those who were anxious to retain their wealth and position in society, were generally arranged by the parents or relations of boys and girls. The boy could be of any age but the girl was required to be very young so as to be yet awaiting the onset of puberty. In point of age she should have been at least three years younger than the bridegroom, if not still younger. *Manu*, the Hindu lawgiver, indeed gives the highest disparity of age allowable between husband and wife as 18 and 16, the wife being always younger. A 30-year man could marry a girl as young as 12 years old, while a 24-year man could marry a girl of 8.[1] Under no circumstances, however, was the bride to be older than

[1] Manusamhita, IX. 94.

the bridegroom. The test for a suitable bride was that she should belong to a wealthy family, have parents and rich relations alive and, besides being beautiful, should possess auspicious marks on her body. *Vatsyayana* does not explicitly mention what constituted auspicious marks but gives a fairly long list of inauspicious signs the possession of which should disqualify any girl. These include physical disproportion as well as the want of relations and the possession of unpleasing names. *Manu*, however, is more positive on this point and lays down that one should marry "a well-made girl, without hairs on her body, having a pleasing name, with a gait as graceful as that of a swan or an elephant, slender, with small even teeth like a row of pearls and with a profusion of fine silky hair on her head."[1] *Vatsyayana* advises both the parties to consult astrological opinion, auguries and signs but urges the rejection of a bride who, otherwise qualified, failed to please the mind and the eye. Practically-minded as he is, he further recommends that the bride should be one whom the bridegroom's people will be proud to receive amongst themselves and the acceptance of whom would not lead to any scandals among one's social set. He advises connection by marriage between families that are equally matched in wealth and social standing.

It seems very likely that in the matter of marriage, particularly the negotiated forms of marriage, the bridegroom's people held the whip hand over those of the bride. For a man could do almost anything, but a respectable woman could never be anything other than

[1] Manusamhita, III. 10.

a wife, and the parents and kinsmen of a girl were faced with the inescapable duty of marrying her off before she had grown up. Women, according to the lawgivers of the Hindus, were created for conceiving offspring[1] and the social method of its achievement was marriage. This, then, was as much a sacrament for a woman as it was the bounden duty of her father or guardians to find a husband for her. An unmarried girl growing up into youth threw the parents into the sin of murdering a Brahmin. A woman, in fact, had to be somebody's property unless she chose to go outside the pale of society and become either a prostitute or a nun. The bride's guardians, therefore, were always anxious to show her off to her best advantage on every occasion on which she might come under the notice of people; for, as *Vatsyayana* says with outspoken realism, "a young maiden is like an article for sale".[2]

Eight forms of marriage were permissible under the law of *Manu*, these being the *Brahma*, *Daiva*, *Arsha*, *Prajapatya*, *Asura*, *Gandharva*, *Rakshasa* and the *Paisacha*. The first four, and probably the fifth, applied to negotiated marriages. The *Gandharva* form had very little to do with family negotiations and the *Rakshasa* and *Paisacha* forms even less, these two being essentially nothing but forcible seizure of women. It will not be out of place here to mention briefly the characteristic feature of each form:

In the *Brahma* form, the father (or a guardian *in loco parentis*) gave away the bride, suitably attired in

[1] Manusamhita, IX. 96.

[2] Vatsyayana, *Kanyasamprayuktadhikarana*, Ch. I.

clothes and jewels, to a bridegroom selected and invited beforehand.

In the *Daiva* form the bride was given away by her father, etc., to a priest officiating at a *Vedic* sacrifice.

In the *Arsha* form the bride was given away by her father etc. to a duly selected bridegroom on receipt from the latter of an ox or a cow or a pair of oxen and kine for the performance of religious sacrifices.

In the *Prajapatya* form, the father or guardian of the bride solemnly welcomed the bridegroom and gave her away to him with the injunction, "Go, both of you, and in unison discharge the duties of a householder".

In the *Asura* form the bridegroom paid money to the father of the bride as the price for possession of the bride and was given away to him.

In the *Gandharva* form the bridegroom mated with the bride out of a passionate desire for being united to each other. This form did not interdict sexual union before a formal wedding ceremony.

In the *Rakshasa* form the bridegroom fought the relations of the bride and, having overpowered, killed or maimed them, took forcible possession of her.

In the *Paisacha* form the bridegroom, taking advantage of the bride's loneliness or her helplessness on account of her being asleep, senseless or intoxicated, ravished her and thus compelled her to marry him.

Religious authorities were very severe in their strictures upon the latter four forms of marriage and, if they could not altogether ban them, declared that the offspring of such marriages would be cruel, untruthful and heretically minded.[1] But as we shall presently see,

[1] Manusamhita, III. 27-34 and III. 41.

young men and women chose to follow the law of love rather than the laws of men.

In negotiated marriages, girls were given away mostly before they had attained puberty; a pubescent girl was not to be selected. The bridegroom, however, in most cases had attained maturity by the then available standard and, as likely as not, had already been initiated into the mysteries of love at the hands of prostitutes. It is, therefore, to be presumed that he would be eager to have carnal possession of his virgin-wife, especially if he were advanced in age, since there existed among all ancient peoples the idea that intercourse with a virgin was a potent magic for the restoration of waning virility on the part of a man. But the great professor of the Art of Love strongly deprecates this undue haste. The advice he has given to the husband,[1] experienced or inexperienced, on the method of approaching a just-married bride is the soundest, sanest and most practical ever given by any adviser and certainly bears recapitulation to-day for the guidance of modern husbands.

The first point in *Vatsyayana's* advice is that the just-married husband and wife should not go upon a lone honeymoon. The second point enunciates a principle—"In approaching his wife the husband must not attempt to advance a single step by force. Women, being by nature tender like flowers, require a delicate approach. When forcibly approached, the memory of the violence will often make them unresponsive to sexual intercourse."[2] The third point emphasised is that sexual

[1] Kamasutra, *Kanyasamprayuktadhikarana,* Ch. II.
[2] Ibid.

intercourse should not be attempted before she has had her first menstrual courses after marriage. This physiological phenomenon being regarded as the signal that the girl was now fit to shoulder the burden of the husband's desire and pregnancy, it was quite a notable event in the family. Gods and the sacred fire were propitiated by ceremonial oblations on the fourth day after catamenia (when it should normally cease) and both husband and wife were enjoined by the Code of Right Conduct to give and receive the bridal embrace.

Now regarding the technique. It is enjoined that for the first three days after the wedding both husband and wife should observe the strictest continence and even eat their food without salt or spices and sleep on the floor. For the next seven days they should meet unreservedly—but in the presence of relations and servants, and never alone. Intimate meetings should take place only from the tenth day onwards. When talk has become frank and free, the husband should try the lighter forms of embrace and, when these have found favour with the wife, the more innocuous kisses. After that, digital caressing of the *mammae* and still later, with slow gradualness, gentle manipulation of the other erogenous zones, including the *pudenda*. All this may take three nights and more, but not before the wife has become ready and willing to have her first adventure into marital pleasures should the husband attempt sexual connection.

Very great stress is laid by the sage of the *Kamasutra* on the importance of the husband gaining the confidence of the wife, for in this fashion alone can a husband assure himself of the wife's response to his urgent

amorous overtures. Of course, she might regard herself as in duty bound to yield herself to her husband, but in that case she would be so passive as to take the salt out of the act of love and the best the husband could expect from such a passionless copulation would be an indifferent relief from the strain of libidinous pressure. There would be no satisfaction of those fine impulses, emotions and sentiments that are associated with the act of love among cultured people. If, on the other hand, she be not won over to his love, she might oppose the husband in his attempt to possess her. The first task of the husband, therefore, should be to effect such intimacy with her as would make her respond to his advances every time he approaches her for sexual satisfaction. It is a grave warning that he gives of the necessity of this:

"The man who neglects a girl because of her shyness is considered by her as a fool ignorant of the ways of a maid and as such, is despised like a beast. The man who, without caring to understand a girl's psychology, attempts to take, or actually takes, possession of her body by force only succeeds in arousing the fear, horror, concern and hatred of the girl. Deprived of the affection and sympathetic understanding she longs for, she becomes obsessed with anxiety which makes her nervous, uneasy and dejected. She either suddenly becomes a hater of the whole male sex altogether or, hating her own husband, gives herself up to other men as a form of revenge".[1]

While early marriages were superseding marriages of love between nubile maidens and mature young men in

[1] Kamasutra, *Kanyasamprayuktadhikarana*, Ch. II.

those parts of India, particularly in the north-western half, where the neo-Aryan or Brahmanic cult had been regaining a foothold from the now-decadent Buddhistic cult, it had not completely succeeded in driving love-marriages out of vogue, particularly in Southern India (*Dakshinapatha*) where neither the earlier Aryan cult nor Buddhism nor neo-Aryanism yet held much ground. (Of the Deccan *Vatsyayana* is openly contemptuous: there, un-Aryanlike, they married cousins and were not clean in their sexual customs.) In many States girls were allowed to grow up into early womanhood before being married and, there being considerable freedom of movement for them, came into contact with young men —mostly within the same caste and social groups, because generally they happened to be within the same economic groups also. This was not against the *Dharmashastras* also. According to *Manu*, a nubile girl was to wait for three years for a husband to be found by her parents or guardians. After that she was to set forth and get a husband by her own initiative.[1] Men sought to win wives just as girls sought to win husbands, and *Vatsyayana's* description leaves no doubt that this courtship was not always innocuous.

Sometimes a young man would lay siege to the heart of a rich man's daughter from her childhood so that she grew up with a strong liking for him. He would ply her and her nurses and attendants with presents and playthings and would be at pains to please her. Mostly, however, the courtship was among grown-up men and girls; the former would then set up a regular campaign to captivate their sweethearts by a display

[1] Manusamhita, IX. 89-93.

of their beauty, wealth and artistic attainments. These lovers embraced, sought to meet each other in secluded places and exchanged confideness in lonely rooms in the dark. Often, though not always—*Vatsyayana* carefully points out—they sealed the compact of their love by surrendering themselves to each other at a suitable opportunity. Likewise, when a young woman was out to secure a husband she would enmesh a suitable young man by various means, including surrender to his embraces, into marrying her without or against the advice of his parents or guardians. That liberties in courtship were not only condoned but connived at is established by the fact that *Vatsyayana* quotes an earlier authority, *Ghotakamukha*, who recommends that so long as these led to marriage, they were quite to be approved of. *Manu* also states that carnal knowledge of an amorous maid of one's own caste is not liable to corporal punishment, though if the maid is not amatively inclined or belongs to a superior caste, the punishment is dismemberment and death respectively.[1]

The sage's description of how lovers married secretly is a confirmatory picture. After marrying secretly in front of the sacrificial fire—this made the union legal and indissoluble—they had sexual intercourse and presented their parents with a *fait accompli*. A maiden who hesitated to take the plunge would be brought to a suitable place under some pretext and married before the fire; or the girl would be plied with liquor by a female friend on a festival night until she became fuddled and would in that condition be taken advan-

[1]Manusamhita, VIII. 364.

tage of; or if an opportunity arose, she would be forcibly carried away and married; or she would be ravished while asleep and thus compelled to marry the rough lover.

It is significant that *Vatsyayana* does not comment on the last three forms of marrige. They are mentioned in the *Dharmashastras* as very reprehensible forms, the *Rakshasa*, *Paisacha* and *Asura* forms. But among ancient *Kshatriyas* and also among the Rajputs of the Middle Ages, marriage by capture was considered a meritorious form of marriage. He does not mention the eighth form of marriage—the *Asura*—at all. In this the bridegroom purchased the bride in exchange of money. There is no doubt that the system of dowry, a *sine qua non* of negotiated marriages, degenerated by degrees into an extortionate practice. The idea of payment by one party or another has become an integral part of negotiated marriages to-day.

The sage of the *Kamasutra* has a pronounced partiality for love-marriages in the *Gandharva* form, *i.e.*, marriage without religious ceremonials and consummated on mutual recognition of the parties as husband and wife. Not that he is much enamoured of Love (with a capital L); for we shall see later that under the scalpel of his analysis even the complex passion of love has yielded the secrets of its composition and gradation. In fact, the *Kamasutra* altogether excludes from its universe of discourse the sentimental, emotional and philosophical aspects of love and confines itself within the limits of the sexual aspect of it. (It would, however, be as rash to conclude from this, as some Western writers on the sexual science have done, that ancient

Indian writers did not know about that hyposexual association between man and woman which goes by the name "Platonic love" as it would be, from a perusal of Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, to conclude that he did not eat, sleep or marry.) *Vatsyayana's* reason for preferring love-marriages was based on the very practical consideration that strong love between husband and wife was the best insurance against the former acquiring a number of wives or transferring his affection to a concubine or a courtesan (which he could do at his will), thus inflicting a heavy burden of misery on the wife and also against the wife making a cuckold of the husband. He impresses it on his female readers that it is infinitely better to be the sole wife of a poor and humble man than to be one of the many wives of a wealthy man. "As the fruit of all good marriages is love", he observes, "*Gandharva* marriage gives happiness for it involves none of the troubles of match-making nor those of selection (as in marriages of convenience) and is resorted to out of abundance of love. It is, therefore, the best of all forms of marriage."[1]

[1] While in practically all States in India man had established his proprietory right over woman and married as many wives and kept as many mistress as he liked, there still existed in the north-western reaches of India (if *Vatsyayana's* reference is accepted as evidence of contemporaneous practice) two States and a principality—*Stri-Rajya*, *Bahlika* and *Gramanari-Visaya* respectively— in which polyandry was in vogue. In these regions, a woman would marry and maintain in her harem a number of young men over whom she lorded it as men did over their wives in other States. The existence of matriarchal States between Transoxania and the Punjab at a time when the rest of India and the civilised world had become dominated by males is a curious fact but its historicity cannot be denied.

V

THE CAREER OF A WIFE

NOTHING apparently so disturbed the old sage as the prospect of a good wife being fated to suffer the constant torture of having a co-wife or co-wives to share her husband's love. Here, again, he is moved by the practical and physical aspect of the torture; for firstly, notwithstanding her economic dependence on and inferior legal status to the male, a wife used to enjoy very wide powers within the domestic sphere and the advent of a co-wife who, being the husband's favourite, might wrest the powers from her hand and govern the household, was a very dreary prospect for the wife. Secondly, there was the strong likelihood that a neglected wife might become hysterical or unbalanced in mind. Nor was the wife's position threatened from this quarter alone. There were the desire-smitten widow and the courtesan, who were better equipped with knowledge and experience of the ways of the male's desire and whose forward tactics in catching beaux were much more likely to ensnare weak-minded husbands than the blundering tactics the average housewife employed in the defence of her position.

Let us visualise, at this stage, the position of a townsman's wife. She was in all essential respects her husband's property, though not, as of old, a chattel to be kept or disposed of according to the husband's fancy. She could not claim the exclusive love of her lord and master except for a few days after her monthly courses.

Both the *Dharmashastras* and the *Kamashastra* regarded women as by character fickle. *Manu*, for example, definitely states that women only long for sexual intercourse irrespective of a man's beauty or ugliness and youth or age.[1] *Vatsyayana* quotes an earlier authority, *Gonikaputra*, to the effect that "women conceive a desire for all handsome and well-dressed men" though he does not absolve men, too, of being equally fickle; "likewise, men desire all handsome and well-dressed women".[2] While a proportion of the urban gentry were themselves great runners after women, they considered the female of the species to be potential adulteresses, while they struck up for themselves a pose of superior morality. A wife, however thorough and impregnable her integrity, always remained an object of suspicion. She is, therefore, advised by the sage of the *Kamasutra* to avoid the company of beggar-women, nuns, women magicians and soothsayers and even wives known to be of lewd character—in short, all women who could even faintly be suspected of intermediacy in adulterous *affaires*.[3] She was not to visit any temple or participate in any social gatherings or festivities except in the company, or with the express permission, of her husband. She must not use any love-philtres to make him love her nor must she betray herself into harsh speech or sulky looks nor arouse the jealousy or suspicion of her lord by talking aside or in whispers to other people, standing on the front doorway to look at

[1] Manusamhita, IX. 14.
[2] Kamasutra, *Paradarikadhikarana*, Ch. I.
[3] Ibid., *Bharyadhikarana*, Ch. I.

passers-by on the street or talking privately with anyone in the recesses of the house-garden. The punishment for giving any grounds of suspicion or for adultery, not resulting in conception, was not, of course, excommunication; for there were purificatory rites that made her clean again.[1] But the irate husband at once married another wife to whom he gave the full control of the household and relegated the offending wife to the position of a family drudge. The wife was required to love her husband loyally, follow his wishes in everything, regard him as her god and, in fact, live exclusively for him. "The reward of this devotion is religious merit, wealth, satisfaction of desire and the possession of a husband without a co-wife to share his love".[2] But the husband on his part regarded the wife as a mere plaything to be fondled and caressed so long as it pleased his fancy and thrown aside into the dusty storage of neglect as soon as he saw something more attractive. A man usually married a second, third or *n*-th wife when he found his first-married stupid, stubborn, immoral, without sex appeal, barren or giving birth to daughters alone. But sometimes he collected wives out of sheer lustfulness. A co-wife not only meant the loss of the husband's love but also the humiliation of being deposed and made the object of everybody's pitiful disregard. A wife, therefore, had to try her best to hold the husband's love and when this was impossible for causes beyond her control, to impress him with her loyalty, efficiency and wisdom so that she might at least be left in the entire

[1] Manusamhita, IX. 19-21.

[2] Kamasutra, *Bharyadhikarana*, Ch. I.

charge of domestic affairs and, in his absence on business or otherwise, deputise him in the management of his estates and business. Even where she was no longer loved, her aim was to hold the confidence of the husband and she is even advised to arrange secret meetings between him and his clandestine mistress.[1] Altogether, she was to act in such a manner that the husband at least realised her devotion to, and love for, him.

The course set for an intelligent wife was consequently a difficult one. She was required not only to be indispensable to the husband for the management of the household but also to be a completely satisfactory instrument for the gratification of his love-desires and a fully competent receptacle for his affections. She had to be as attractive in her bearing as a courtesan, as forward as a lascivious widow and as loyal as Caesar's wife. She had to be proficient in music, dancing, painting and the rest of the sixty-four fine arts as well as the sixty-four erotic arts of marital approach. She had to excel the courtesan in these for it was as likely as not that the husband had already tasted of the pleasures that experienced courtesans could give. It is little wonder that a large percentage of wives failed to come up to scratch. The section in the *Kamasutra* devoted to the conduct of wives conclusively shows that it was common for a man of the wealthier classes to keep a *harem* of several wives, mistresses and concubines. These could be either secret or open. The secret mistress was the adulterous wife of another citizen or a rustic woman, amours with whom must in the name of

[1] Ibid., *Ibid.*, Ch. II.

fashion be kept secret. The open class of mistresses consisted of the courtesan and the widow. Sexual association with a widow was "neither approved nor disapproved" but her right to remain under the roof of her irregular husband was not disputed. There was no question of marriage for a widowed woman, but so long as she did not come within the categories of prohibited women, she was considered eligible for sexual companionship. From the fact that *Vatsyayana* defines in some length the duties of widow-concubines, it may be concluded that a considerable number of young widows chose to enjoy themselves.

With kings and feudal chiefs the *harem* was a regular wilderness of sex-starved wives, concubines and courtesans. The average household of the wealthy was thus a honeycomb of domestic intrigue where wives vied with one another in obtaining the master's favour and, where possible, admitted clandestine lovers either singly or on a group or collective basis.

VI

THE GILDED VICE OF ADULTERY

WITH such extensive liberties for men and the existence of such a number of dissatisfied and sex-starved women in the households of the great and considerable freedom of movement for women, it was inevitable that there should be some prevalence of the gilded vice of clandestine love-making. This was very much pronounced in royal households, for kings not only enjoyed the widest liberties in the matter of acquisition of wives and concubines but in several States were entitled by local usage to demand temporary possession of the wives of private citizens to satisfy their passing fancies. *Vatsyayana's* narration of these vices has drawn upon him the wrath of several Indian critics who do not like this spoiling of their distinctive picture of an ancient India inhabited exclusively by *rishis* and sages, where even fools discussed the *Vedanta* and men had marital relations with their wives once a month or even at longer intervals only for the propagation of the race. It was, however, a regrettably inevitable feature of the feudal order and was no less prevalent in the monogamous Christian States than in the polygamous Hindu and Muslim States of the Middle Ages. Adultery was punishable with death[1] in almost every society, yet it

[1] "The adulteress shall be devoured by dogs in public and the adulterer burnt in public on a bed of iron spikes." Other gruesome penalties are also named. *Manusamhita,* VIII, 371-385.

was never anywhere suppressed. Even to-day, under the capitalistic system, the evil persists.

As a realist, *Vatsyayana* could not shut his eyes to this side of the sexual life of the times, though he was quite evidently out of sympathy with this lustful practice. Nevertheless he recognised that for high diplomatic reasons and for reasons connected with political intrigues it was sometimes necessary for a man to be secretly intimate with the wife of one great man or another. Life, to him as well as the author of the *Arthaniti* or the Science of Polity, was the first object and the preservation of life even at the cost of wives or wealth was accepted as a sound principle of behaviour. He, therefore, recognised that one might so violently fall in love with another's wife as to physically wither and even die for her. In such a case all considerations of propriety or impropriety and right or wrong had to go by the board and adultery permitted. *Vatsyayana* has, however, prescribed a fairly efficacious test by which the genuineness and intensity of passion can be distinguished from mere lascivious fancy. With his characteristic *flair* for classification he has indicated ten successive stages, ranging from pleasure at first sight to madness, fainting fits and death, by which a consuming passion should progress.

True to his realism, *Vatsyayana* recognises the polygamous instinct in man and woman. He concurs with *Goinkaputra* (an earlier master) that "women naturally desire handsome and resplendent men; likewise, men desire handsome and resplendent women". But no respectable woman or man runs after every desirable creature of the other sex that he or she may chance to meet. There is a long list of reasons why; some of

these are cultural and relate to the higher moral sentiments associated with the Aryan civilisation (like love for the husband, consideration for offspring, moral scruples etc.); while others relate to more utilitarian considerations like opportunity and suitability of the lover. There is also an exhaustive list of men who are likely to prove successful with women, and women who are likely to fall easily. Among the ladies' men the first place goes to the adept in the principles of love (*Kamasutra*) and the second goes to the man who can spin an engaging yarn. The young Adonis, the passionate neighbour, the friend's husband, the well-known libertine, the popular hero and the even the young bridegroom in the family are mentioned as successful destroyers of the urban wife's virtue. At the same time there were wives who were only too willing to furnish the husband with a pair of horns; among these were the wife discarded without reason, the wife who mixed promiscuously with men, the young widow, the artist's wife, the greedy wife of a poor man, the wife persecuted by the husband's jealousy and—curiously enough—the wife who has several younger brothers of the husband living in the same house.[1] Mismatching—i.e., the marriage of a dunce with a qualified lady and temperamental incompatibility—is also mentioned as a reason. A woman, *Vatsyayana*

[1] It is not possible to say from *Vatsyayana's* mention alone whether the connection of a wife with her husband's younger brothers was actually practised ; for the *Kamasutra* is a condensation of several much earlier treatises on the science of *Kama* and probably mentions several customs that were in vogue in more ancient times but did not survive in his time. But it is possible that one or more of the eldest brother's many wives may have found consolation in her brothers-in-law's arms.

sententiously remarks, is naturally fallible; her desire has to be fanned into a passion by artifice and by the intelligent application of ways and means to remove the causes of her hesitation. Then alone is a man successful in seducing a woman.[1] There are nine reasons, as mentioned by *Vatsyayana*, that led women to go astray. These are: (1) Addiction to social parties of ladies where there is much low talk and free drinking etc.; (2) excessive freedom; (3) husband's immorality; (4) unrestrained association with males; (5) long absence of the husband; (6) residence abroad, i.e., away from known people and kinsmen; (7) privations; (8) moving in a set of wives of easy virtue; and (9) excessive jealousy on the husband's part.[2] It is interesting to compare these with the six reasons mentioned by *Manu* as tending to defile a woman, namely, (1) wine-drinking, (2) evil company, (3) separation from the husband, (4) idle rambling, (5) sleep at the improper time and (6) residence in another's house.[3] It will be noted that the law-giver completely exonerates the domestic deity—the husband—from all responsibility, while the professor of love makes the husband directly or indirectly responsible for practically all the causes for the fall of a woman.

Vatsyayana describes in details the manner in which the philanderer bore down on his prey and gives particular attention to the manner in which secret vice was extensively practised in royal *zenanas*. The object of all this intriguing but uncomfortable description is to

[1] Kamasutra, *Paradarikadhikarana*, Ch. I.
[2] Ibid., *Ibid.*, Ch. VI.
[3] Manusamhita, IX. 13.

warn husbands of the dangers they run for, he says, just as a man can rob another's wife of her virtue, it is possible that his own wife may be robbed of hers by yet another man. A man who is wise in the ways of adulterers and adulteresses is never deceived in respect of his own wife. Efforts to seduce others' wives often fail, he says; moreover, such efforts are extremely risky, sinful and costly. "One should never therefore run after others' wives," he concludes.[1]

Moral precepts, however, cannot despite their excellence cure evils that flow from the fountain-source of social life, and *Vatsyayana* was acute enough to realise this. The remedy he suggests by implication is that the wife should be so well equipped in the art and technique of erotic satisfaction as to hold the entire field of the husband's desire and that the husband should be wise in the ways of passion and able to control his desire. But this did not cover all cases and, as one can readily infer, the prescription was hardly likely to succeed. As a matter of fact it did not succeed, nor has any other remedy succeeded in cleansing the human heart of the desire to run after others' wives and husbands. So long as the sense of property in husband or wife and the legal bar against adultery exist, the irresistible desire for poaching on others' preserves will continue, though it is possible that education in a high moral standard of conduct may keep it within restrictions.

The vice of adultery, as has already been remarked, was most prevalent in royal circles. *Vatsyayana* has described with grim detachment the corrupt practices

[1] Kamasutra, *Paradarikadhikarana*, Ch. VI.

in royal harems of the different States. In *Prachya-desha* (east of Bihar), for example, a king's women obtained satisfaction through their female attendants dressed up as men; in other places they had young men of the city smuggled into the harem, disguised as women. In States where the harem was very well guarded, as in *Vidarbha*, the King's sons themselves were persuaded to give satisfaction to all the royal ladies with the exception of their mothers. In other countries, harem guards, artisans, servitors and Brahmins who had a more or less free entry into the harem, were pressed into service for relieving the royal ladies' *libido*. Kings and potentates used many devices for gaining possession of beautiful wives of their subjects, including the granting of favours to their husbands, the employment of inmates of the royal harem to seduce them and even the internment on false charges of high treason of husbands unwilling to sell their wives' virtue. Officers of the kings had their methods of having sexual relations with the poorer classes of women, a large percentage of whom subsisted on the dole given by kings for working in the royally owned industries. (The kings under the feudal order not only taxed privately owned industry and commerce but were themselves owners of very big industries and commercial concerns.) In western India a king could call up the wives of noble citizens to attend on him and in *Andhra* he had the right to first possession of the daughters of his subjects.[1]

Thus to the common human tendency to polygamy and adultery was added the strong incentive of power,

[1] Ibid., *Ibid.*, Ch. V.

privilege and sometimes prerogative, producing a tainted atmosphere of extreme lustfulness that radiated from the king's throne to ever-widening outer layers of society. Later reformers under the influence of Brahminism tried to clear this vicious atmosphere by enjoining child marriages, driving women to *purdah* and inculcating into them, by a rigorous system of mal-education and constant suggestion, the cult of the *Sutee*. For men they recommended a fairly strict course of continence but there was not much rigour about the recommendations; for while women were property, men were proprietors, and within the family circle the position of a man was as much buttressed with privileges as that of a king outside. The net result of this was an emasculation of the race that made the Indian States an easy prey to invasion and domination by the Muslims.

Vatsyayana offers no such quack remedies. At the same time he suggests no cure for the disease of immorality except the futile one of guarding the harem with the help of sentries who have no greed, no lust and no fear. A point to be noted in this connection is that there is no mention in the *Kamasutra* of eunuch guards for royal harems, nor does *Vatsyayana* recommend eunuchs to guard them. As a matter of fact, the employment of eunuchs does not appear to have been customary in Hindu India, probably because of the association of eunuchs with perverse practices which will be referred to later. All the same, the causes that *Vatsyayana* refers to as tending to lead respectable women astray into the vicious bypaths of adultery are interesting; promiscuous association with unrelated men, jealousy of the husband, impecuniosity and

absence of control are mentioned as the prominent ones and they leave little doubt that with all his catholicity *Vatsyayana* was a firm believer in man's proprietory rights over woman, if not to the extent of thinking, like *Manu*, of her as a mere "field" for procreation.[1] It is in this light that his instruction to wives to avoid scrupulously the company of mendicant women, Buddhist and Jain nuns, women of easy virtue, women soothsayers and magicians etc.—in short, all who might even remotely be suspected of intermediacy in a *liaison* —in order to keep on the right side of their husbands, becomes intelligible.[2] The practical way he suggests by implication to husbands to guarding the virtue of their wives is to provide the latter with complete sexual satisfaction, to court them anew every day and to behave to them as to equals. Under a social system in which men and women have equal rights such a course should not be difficult of following with success; but when one party had an overbearing superiority in privilege and also retained the right to collect women publicly or in private, the psychological barriers to such a procedure became insurmountable and in time even courtship came to be regarded by social reformers with as much repugnance as adultery.

[1] Manusamhita, IX. 27 and also IX. 33.
[2] Kamasutra, *Bharyadhikarana*, Ch. I.

times even prostitutes performed the act.[1] It is interesting to note that the kingdoms in which *Vatsyayana* mentions *fellatio* was prevalent are all situated in upper India, viz., *Sindhu*, *Lata*, *Punjab*, *Ajodhya* and *Surasena*, all belonging, or adjacent, to the upper Ganges-Jumna *doab*. East of *Kausambi* the vice appears to have been unknown. In *Panchala* it was looked upon with great disfavour but in the country east of *Anga* those who indulged in it were considered unfit for social intercourse. As the former countries lay within and on the boundary of Alexander's Greek empire, there may be some justification for the claim made by certain scholars that this practice was not an indigenous one but an importation by the Greeks under Alexander the Great from the West, where the cult of Aphrodite had developed into a system of Bacchanalian orgies. If this view is accepted, it places the composition of the *Kamasutra* indisputably, at a period considerably later than the Greek invasion, (326-325 B.C.), for *Vatsyayana* alludes in this connection to the serious existence of a certain body of literature on *fellatio* from which he complied his chapter on it. There is, however, nothing in *Vatsyayana* that confirms this opinion and, like many another likely surmise, this one must remain in the no-man's land of "not proven". The tendency of some other scholars to regard this chapter of the *Kamasutra* as extraneous must also, in the absence of confirmation, be placed in the same category.

The employment of artificial means such as the phallic sheath and the "Dutch wife" was mostly limited, in the case of the former, to royalty and the

[1] Kamasutra, *Samprayogadhikarana*, Ch. IX.

nobility, artificial *membrums* of precious metals with inlaid jewels also being mentioned. The latter were generally used by ladies who were deprived of the company of males but *Vatsyayana* recommends its use to procure satisfaction of a very passionate wife by a meagrely sexed husband or lover. Little has been said of the "Dutch wife", i.e., an artificially prepared female form, beyond a bare mention. In view of the easy availability of prostitutes, to which I have already referred, it seems extremely improbable, however, that the "Dutch wife" was much in vogue, though it may have been used for the sake of novelty by a small number of perverts. Nothing, again, is said about masturbation except a bare mention. But of *pæderasty* it has been mentioned with a great deal of disapproval that people in Southern India sometimes committed it on women.

If the prevalence of a large prostitute class kept down the incidence of sexual abnormalities in ancient India, it encouraged the practice of processes by which the physical proportions of the reproductive organs might be increased. These were apparently more prevalent in *Dakshinapatha* than in Northern India and included circumcision, perforation and scarification of the *glans penis*, and the application of irritative insects and herbal recipés and diverse other concoctions. It also encouraged in normal sexual intercourse practices that were undoubtedly sadistic in character. These are biting, scratching and beating with resultant cries.[1] The manner in which *Vatsyayana* has described the

[1] *Nakha-dasanachhadya, prahanana* and *sheetkrita.* Kamasutra, *Samprayogikadhikarana,* Ch. IV, Ch. V, and Ch. VII.

art of the former two practices tends to show that these had been raised to the fineness and gentleness of an art, though at the same time he makes it abundantly clear that in the hands of highly passionate men and women this might reach the proportions of a row. Judging by the importance attached by the author to these two, it seems very likely that good living and generous libations made quite a large number of men and women in ancient India capable of giving and taking rough handling in amorous intercourse. Women of the Ganges-Jumna *doab*, however, are mentioned as averse to all the three processes. Women of the *Bahlika* (Bactria) and *Avanti* (modern Gwalior State, more or less) kingdoms are stated to have been similarly disposed. Women of Eastern *Malwa*, *Kurukshetra*, *Kosala*, *Maharashtra* and *Magadha* were, on the testimony of *Vatsyayana*, very passionate by temperament and hardy of body and accepted a lot of rough handling from their lovers. The women of the Indus Basin went still further: they were, in addition, very fond of *fellatio*. Women of *Konkan*, Northern Gujerat (*Lata*), *Andhra*, *Dravida*, *Vanabasa* (between *Konkan* and *Andhra*) and *Gauda* (Bengal, Northern Bihar and Orissa) did not like being beaten by their lovers. There is no doubt, however, that the practice of a little beating with fists or the extended palm was commonly considered a good adjuvant to the passion of love. A fairly well-codified technique of beating was in existence, and so long as it went by the book, it was little more than patting and stroking. But in the Deccan, states *Vatsyayana*, a passionate lover thought he had not given his woman the highest pleasure until he had boxed her on the chest and on the ears; and his com-

mentator *Yashodhara* remarks that sometimes he (the lover) even used stones to strike his beloved into transports of pleasure. *Vatsyayana* reports several cases—all from the Deccan—where death followed as a result of this orgy; at the same time he recognises that there is no knowing what one will do under the influence of an overpowering excitement.[1]

[2] Ibid., *Ibid.*, Ch. VII..

VIII

THE VICE OF PROSTITUTION

WE now come to the subject of prostitutes. Prostitution in an open or disguised manner is, as we have already suggested, an integral feature of the feudal order of society. In fact, it is an integral feature of all orders of society based on class privileges. The absence of prostitution in Soviet Russia and its great prevalence in capitalistic Britain, Germany and other countries tends to show that it is essentially an economic problem. With his *flair* for classification and his partiality for the system of three, *Vatsyayana* divides prostitutes into three categories :—

(1) The courtesan, "who is well educated in the sixty-four arts, has an excellent disposition, is beautiful and is endowed with many virtues" and "is always honoured by Kings, praised by and sought after by great beaux and acclaimed by the general people". She is mentioned as clever in the fine arts and in the ways of pleasing men.

(2) The beautiful prostitute, who has no outstanding merit except a beautiful body for hire.

(3) The common whore, who has neither qualities nor beauty and is only a convenient instrument for the promiscuous satisfaction of an indiscriminately urgent passion.

The courtesan occupies a distinctive place of her own in ancient Indian literature. The *Puranas* mention her

frequently and with evident satisfaction. The Hindu heaven is peopled with divine courtesans like *Urvasi, Rambha, Menaka*, etc., who represent the highest type of beauty, physical perfection, culture and artistic attainments, are the last word in sex appeal and provide the most complete satisfaction of desire. Kings and potentates used to foster and encourage courtesans and the urban beaux vied with one another in seeking dates with them, for costly as an entertainment with them was, it was regarded as a demonstration of one's wealth and good taste. Moreover, it was considered an honour to be spoken well of by a courtesan for, being adepts in the fine and the polite arts, their approval was like a diploma in urban education. Forced to rely on their professional ability to earn their living—wealth to them was the greatest objective of life—they were experts in the arts requisite for the entertainment of man and for the complete satisfaction of those urgent desires that could not be satisfied by wedded wives who, as they grew older and became mothers of children, submitted to the physical demands of the husbands with the indifference of a routine procedure. Apparently she never regarded her profession as a sinful one and, if she did, she atoned by devoting the surplus of her profits to the construction of temples, rest-houses, water-reservoirs, bridges and roads and by the anonymous gift of cattle and riches to good Brahmins (since a good Brahmin would accept no gift from a prostitute). She stood high above the ordinary run of harlots and only when she had distinguished herself by her physical perfection, artistic excellence and good manners was she given the appellation of a *ganika*. Love or preference

seldom entered into the consideration of such a courtesan; she was so trained in the art of entertainment that she treated every visitor who paid the price with the same appearance of love and enthusiasm and gave them the same satisfaction. There could be no city without its prostitutes, who were well cared for by the State; and a famous courtesan was as much the pride of the citizens as a famous poet or scholar.

By another classification, prostitutes are divided into three different categories, namely, (*i*) those who attached themselves to one beau at a time and lived as concubines, (*ii*) those who were maintained by a number of beaux at one and the same time and (*iii*) those who lent themselves to new beaux every night. Their aim was to combine pleasure with profit and, if necessary, pleasure was subordinated to profit. There is an elaborate description of the methods by which they relieved their paramours of their wealth and threw them out when they had lost their all. That *Vatsyayana* compiled this section of the *Kamasutra* with the object of showing up the unreality and falsity of prostitutes' acting of love is quite evident from his remark that "even experienced men can hardly ascertain from signs and gestures whether a prostitute's love is genuine or false. . . They can simulate, out of abounding greed, all the outward behaviour incidental to love. And as for men, they are undiscriminating . . . and act on sexual impulse".[1] Courtesans planned to attach themselves to citizens of high birth, great wealth and generous tastes, simulated all the devotion of a lawful wife

[1] Kamasutra, *Vaishikadhikarana*, Ch. II.

and tried every excuse to extort money from the paramour.

The *modus operandi* of the prostitute was to sit, dressed up in her best fineries, at a place overlooking the street without exposing herself to any great extent and creating that titillating mystery of half-exposure and half-secrecy that whets the appetite of the libertine. She had her touts and agents to assist her in getting her paramours, whom she had marked down either for their wealth or for their fame. Diseased, dirty and ill-reputed men were to be avoided. Even when she was not required to receive visitors for money or pleasure she was advised to keep herself in form by having regular embraces as an exercise; for was not the act of love her stock in trade and did not that act call for physical stamina?[1] When she had caught a paramour, she behaved as sweetly to him as an ideal wife, meeting all his physical and psychological demands half-way, until he had been sucked dry of his wealth. Then she threw him over in favour of a new victim who, like a ripe orange, awaited being sucked. A master of method as he is, *Vatsyayana* has gone into long details of behaviour and considerations on the part of prostitutes which it would not be possible to discuss within the restricted compass of this brochure. The inquisitive reader is requested to turn to the *Kamasutra* for the satisfaction of his curiosity.

By the age-old rule of the profession (observed all over the world and all over the centuries), every prostitute had a mother or an adopted mother to look

[1] Ibid., *Ibid.*, Ch. I.

after the material interests of the harlot who usually feigned an all-consuming love for her paramour that completely eclipsed all such sordid considerations as money or costly gifts.

Interesting accounts of how elderly courtesans introduced their daughters into the professional market are given by *Vatsyayana.* The youthful daughter, already instructed in her professional duties by female trainers, was presented to an assembly of rich young men and offered by the mother to the suitor who would give her the best price. This damsel had already undergone defloration by digital intromission at the hands of her instructresses and been trained in those forms of sexual congress that require acrobatic skill. She was the monopoly of her "husband" who had sole access to her for a year. After that she was free to ply her profession but whenever the "husband" made a call on her, she was bound to give up her professional engagements for the night.[1]

Vatsyayana does not allude to *Devadasis* or courtesans attached to temples but deals only with secular ones. It may be inferred from this circumstance that the institution of sacred prostitution had fallen into disfavour, at least in Northern India, in his time and was being replaced by a growing army of secular prostitutes. The latter formed a distinct social class, generally hereditary in character. She belonged to no recognisable caste but was available to anybody who could pay for her services except, of course, the man from the village. Save in the heyday of Buddhist

[1] Kamasutra, *Aupanishadikadhikarana,* Ch. I.

supremacy she had no right of admission into respectable society by way of marriage. She had to live as a prostitute and die as one or as an ascetic, the only other casteless class in India.

IX

INTIMATE SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

We will discuss briefly that part of the *Kamasutra* which deals with the intimate sexual behaviour of man and woman. Notwithstanding the decay of the old order of civilisation and the emergence of a completely different order human nature has remained fundamentally the same as of old and the psycho-physical factors involved in intimate sexual conduct have also remained the same. It is, therefore, possible to judge *Vatsyayana's* genius by modern standards on at least this one count. Taking into consideration the standard of anatomical and physiological knowledge in the ancient world (they, however, have little to do with the technique of congress), the knowledge, sanity and practical wisdom displayed by the author of the *Kamasutra* is amazingly modern and essentially true. The present writer considers *Vatsyayana's* description of the technique and ways and means as the most complete, methodical and commonsense one among all similar ones, both ancient and modern. There is a severe detachment, unwavering dignity and cold methodical logic in the manner of his discussion of this highly tempting subject that raises him to the position of the world's first exponent of the sexual science. Certainly no ancient writer has approached his high standard and no modern writer has excelled him. His whole work is conclusive evidence that he is, if anything, a master of method. It is in this section of it that this great

quality has been displayed to the greatest advantage. It would be out of place here to discuss the minutiæ of intimate sexual conduct and compare the old sage's findings with those of contemporary authorities. Suffice it to say that there is not much in the way of objectivity and meticulous observation in which he yields the palm to them.

The fundamental propositions on which *Vatsyayana* has built up his system are that there is a physical side to the love of man and woman and that the existence of love between them does not solve the question of marital happiness. Despite the perfect suitability of a man to a woman in points of temperament, pursuits and sentiments and the existence of that degree and shade of love between them which calls out for mutual physical surrender, it is perfectly possible (and it actually so happens) that homes may be unhappy on account of physical disparities between a normally sexed couple. These disparities are not by any means abnormal; on the other hand, they are the rule, and it is rare for a couple to be evenly matched from the physical standpoint. A modicum of love, it may reasonably be assumed, exists between the average husband and wife; there undoubtedly is flaming passion when clandestine lovers meet; but the physical contact that marks the culmination of the passion of love may be, and sometimes is, unpleasant, even painful to the point of causing repugnance. Is mankind then doomed to find bitterness at the highest point of its experience of love in the flesh? No, there are natural remedies for the evil in most cases, in fact, for almost all normal cases. There are also unnatural remedies that are in use. *Vatsyayana* has discussed all of these. He starts

with the thesis that it is wrong to regard the sexual act as a function; it should be regarded more or less as a work of art. The point he makes is that the male should make a sexual approach not for an urgent relief but for a pleasure like, say, singing at a concert or acting in a theatrical play. Women also feel the same pleasure as men from sexual contact; and in obtaining his pleasure it is a man's duty to see that he has also given the same degree of pleasure to his partner for, as he states with utilitarian matter-of-factness, a woman denied of the satisfaction may become hysterical. It is necessary, therefore, to make a hard preparation for awakening the female partner to the same degree of passion and eagerness. The process, however, is pleasant; it is generally covered by the one word "love-play". Under the influence of a powerful exaltation of feeling humanity has shown remarkable powers of enduring and, what is more, finding pleasure in physical pain. In normal sexual contact there should be just that sense of exaltation which would turn painful physical disparities into instruments of exquisite pleasure.

The complete act of love is divided in the *Kamasutra* into three stages—(*i*) the prelude, (*ii*) the climax and (*iii*) the afterglow. The sage dismisses as *minor* or *assumed* satisfaction the habitual practice of sexual congress without reference to the other partner, the vicarious gratification of *libido* by methods other than normal congress and even satisfaction from normal congress with persons other than those eagerly desired. Only that arising from major union with a person beloved is accepted as the *real* or *principal* form of erotic satisfaction. The act of union includes eight

steps—four of them, namely, the *embrace*, the *kiss*, the *nail-mark*, the *teeth-mark*, belonging to the first stage, and the other four, namely, *coital attitudes*, *stroking* and *sounding*, *reversion of attitude* and *fellatio* belonging to the second. Each of these eight steps possess roughly eight sub-steps, the total number of sub-steps being 64, corresponding to the 64 arts. It is not necessary that in all cases and upon all the women all the eight steps with their sub-steps should have to be practised. Some of them may be called for, and some of them not, in bringing the partner concerned to a state of eager reciprocity.

The *embrace*, being a mark of affection, came first in the sequence of love-play. The *kiss* generally signifies a desire for closer contact and came next. Then came *nail-marking* and *teeth-marking*, after which the major act commenced. Nail-marking was regarded in ancient India almost as a ritual of love-making and women were prone to exhibit the scratches, as the visible token of their lovers' or husbands' violent infatuation, in the select company of their female friends. Moreover, the scars remained for years and served, by evoking memories of past love and revelries, as a sort of love-philtre, Not all the localities in India were uniform in their toleration of all these preliminaries. Women of the Ganges-Jumna *doab*, "being of decent habits", liked the embrace but disliked kissing, nail-marking and biting as being "unclean". Women of *Bahlika* and *Avantipura* also had similar tastes, while those of *Purva-Malwa* and *Abhira* liked all the processes so long as they were not too robustly practised. Women of the Indus basin, *Aparanta*, *Lata*, *Stri-Rajya*, *Koshala*,

Maharashtra and *Nagara* were aggressively passionate, but those of *Andhra*, *Dravida*, *Vanabasa* and *Gauda* were amenable to the mild exercise of the preliminaries. The discriminating lover is advised to follow only those methods that were agreeable to the women concerned and that served to arouse her passion speedily. The need for gentle handling is, indeed, stressed at every step, though *Vatsyayana* admits that there is no knowing what a couple of lovers will do when they are in the throes of an overmastering passion. No love-play, however, was deemed necessary in intercourse with maidservants, rustic women and common whores.

The standard posture for sexual intercourse was dorsal posture, the woman lying on her back and the man adopting the superior position. A common variant of this posture was the reversed dorsal position in which the woman took the active rôle. The reasons for which this was resorted to, as stated by *Vatsyayana*, are various. The first reason is to bring the sexual act to a successful conclusion on both sides when the man would be tired of swaying his waist without reaching the ejaculatory stage with the woman not yet in the neighbourhood of an orgasm. The second is that some women find it easier to achieve an orgasm by this reversed method. There is shrewd psychological observation behind his advice that "even if a woman conceals her intimate desires and tastes in sexual embrace out of shyness, she inevitably betrays them out of exuberance of passion when she lies uppermost." Thus an intelligent lover can, by initiating her into the mysteries of love in the reversed posture, follow the

line of expression her desire takes and please her by conforming to it.[1]

Several minor variations in the standard posture have been made to suit disparities in physical proportions. A number of unusual postures to add piquancy to the act are mentioned—the standing posture, the "suspended" posture and the quadrupedal posture. Further postures, inclining definitely to the abnormal, are also mentioned, as for example, group *coitus* by a single male and group *coitus* by a single woman. The latter is said to have been practised in the matriarchal States of the north-west, in low brothels where a company of men engaged a prostitute and in royal harems inhabited by sex-starved women when they could smuggle in a secret lover.

It is hardly possible within the scope of this article to touch on all the topics dealt with by *Vatsyayana* on this head. It is only necessary here to mention two facts. First, he never mentions *coitus reservatus* or the method of withdrawal before ejaculation. The ancient Hindus did not regard this method with favour. Secondly, he mentions the use of artificial methods, including phallic rings and sheaths to bring the woman, where necessary, to a state of orgasm as the requisite *finale* to the sexul act. These, however, he deems necessary only in exceptional cases, for the elaborate love-play he has recommended is calculated to prove effective in the average case.

We now come to the third stage of sexual congress—the *afterglow*. The ancients knew more about this stage, and attached more importance to it, than either

[1] Kamasutra, *Samprayogikadhikarana*, Ch. VIII.

Marie Stopes or Van de Velde, who appear to have brought something new to the notice of lovers in Western countries. After the act is done, the lovers are advised to move apart and wash and tidy themselves in separate places. Then they should come together again, have liquid and solid refreshments and, having recuperated from the exertions, perfume themselves and sing or recite love poetry or exchange amorous confidences until they are overtaken by sleep.

It remains to be added that neither *Vatsyayana* nor his predecessors nor the modern experts of the West have any completely satisfactory remedy for the state which develops in the married couple after sexual intercourse has become a habitual practice. It is not possible on the part of a wife to feel the same flaming passion on every occasion she has to meet the demands of a pressing husband as she experienced on the red-hot days of her early marital relations. But it would appear that the *Kamasutra* prescribes the best remedy so far by insisting upon the husband following an elaborate routine of love-play and being always on the lookout for signs of response in the woman. That this cannot be the ideal remedy is neither the fault of *Vatsyayana* nor of women in general, but an inevitable consequence of the economic structure of society in which woman is the property of man and has to be prepared to be at his beck and call, and in which man always remains in a position to demand sexual satisfaction from the wife.

X

CONCLUSION

It will be evident from the foregoing that *Vatsyayana* painted objectively the sexual life of the wealthy—the idle rich—in towns and laid down the principles and technique of what was considered, in the light of his own experience and that of his predecessors, to be the rational and practical conduct in sexual life. By far the larger part of the population lived, however, away from towns; they, too, had a sex life, but *Vatsyayana* did not find any interest in examining it. He was no social reformer but a chronicler, analyst and grammarian of the sexual life of the times. He had no complaints against the feudal order under which he lived except against those excesses that offended feudal conceptions of morality. His greatest virtue lay in the application of the logical method in his arrangement of facts and in his development of a thesis, in cold, unrelenting scientific detachment and in the broadness and catholicity of his outlook. The excesses he has chronicled with precision and seriousness would appear, in the view of modern students, to be inherent in all societies of all ages that rest on a system of class and sex privileges. Adultery and prostitution, perversions and abnormalities flourish in almost all countries even today.

What, in the sum, is the lesson that *Vatsyayana* sought to teach? The lesson is that though the sexual appetite has to be met, it must be socialised. It should

not offend against the principles of *Dharma* nor should it interfere with the acquisition of wealth. One's sexual conduct should be so managed and regulated as to harmonise with the society in which one moves and also with his own tastes and convictions. In other words, an ideal beau should not bow to the wind of chance desires but should exercise care, tact and discretion so that he might be irreproachable, doing the right thing at the right time and never departing from the accepted code of proper conduct. The lesson, above all, is that sexual life is a part and parcel of one's cultural life, and that the test for gauging the depth of one's culture is how much of the overall cultural factor one can throw into one's sexual relationships.

Whether sexual relationships can ever achieve the high standard of complete normality among the masses of mankind is a question that cannot be answered with any amount of certainty. The only certain conclusion that may be reached on the strength of historical observation is that there can be no solution of the problem under the existing order of society. A new morality may come with a new world order; only then can the relationship between man and woman rest on a new footing and a new recognition. Until that millennium has come, the psychological barriers against a recognition of the innate equality of woman with man will tend to persist. Born in a doubly hedged-in feudal society and living his life as a privileged member of the Brahminical hierarchy, *Vatsyayana* preached the practical equality of the sexes in intimate love-life. He towers above his contemporaries, indeed, above all ancients, as a giant among men and a genius of imperishable greatness.

THE END